THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

11150 EAST BOULEVARD AT UNIVERSITY CIRCLE
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44106 CABLE ADDRESS: MUSART CLEVELAND
SHERMAN E. LEE, DIRECTOR TELEPHONE: 421-7340

January 4, 1978
PRESS RELEASE
for release on receipt

CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART HAS PURCHASED JOINTLY WITH STICHTING COLLECTIE THYSSEN--BORNEMISZA THE KINGSTON TUREENS

The famous Kingston Tureens, a pair of Rococo style silver tureens with stands designed by Juste-Aurele Meissonnier (1695-1750), the celebrated goldsmith and designer to King Louis XV of France, were purchased on November 8, 1977 at public auction at Christie's in Geneva, Switzerland, by the Cleveland Museum of art in conjunction with Stichting Collectie Thyssen--Bornemisza. The purchase was made with the understanding that the Cleveland Museum would have its choice of the tureens and the Stichting Collectie Thyssen--Bornemisza would take the other. After conservation examinations and cleaning both tureens will be placed on exhibition in the Cleveland Museum of Art. The Stichting Collectie Thyssen--Bornemisza tureen will be on extended loan to the Cleveland Museum.

The tureens, described by Cleveland Museum of Art director Sherman E. Lee as, "The most important works in silver made in Europe since the Renaissance," were commissioned from Meissonnier by Evelyn Pierrepont, second Duke of Kingston (1711-1773), and executed between 1734 and 1736. "With their asymmetrical design, graceful curves, and imaginative treatment of natural motifs," said Dr. Lee, "these tureens represent the purest expression of the 18th-century Rococo style, of which Meissonnier was one of the principal originators."

-more-

Standing approximately 14½" high by 18" long by 15" wide, the tureens are, except for their covers, identical in design. The body of each tureen is shaped like a large shell, a principal motif of the Rococo style, and rests on cast bunches of celery, onions, and carrots. The tureen stands are asymmetrical in form with upcurved borders chased in the forms of waves, scrolls, and foliage. The cover of the Cleveland Museum tureen is surmounted by a model of a partridge, crayfish, mushroom, parsnip, and large foliage spray which forms the finial. Each piece--stand, tureen and cover--is signed by Meissonnier.

The Cleveland Museum tureen is illustrated on folio 72 of Meissonnier's Oeuvre, a series of engravings of the artist's designs published in Paris by Huquier between 1742 and 1751. The work has been published in a number of other periodicals and books, most recently Dorothea Nyberg, Meissonnier, An Eighteenth Century Maverick, Benjamin Blum, New York, 1969 and Frank Davis, French Silver 1450-1825, Praeger, New York, 1970.

After the Duke of Kingston's death, his widow removed most of his art collection, including the tureens, to an estate which she had purchased near St. Petersburg, Russia. When she died, the tureens were seized by her Russian creditors and sold in St. Petersburg. They next appear in the collection of Prince Bezborodko (1747-1799), Grand Chancellor of Russia. His heirs sold the tureens to Alexander Polovtzoff (1832-1909), Secretary of State under Tsar Alexander III. Polovtzoff's children in turn sold the tureens at auction in 1909 in Paris to the dealer J. Seligmann, who purchased them for J. Pierpont Morgan.

# # #

For additional information contact David Patterson or Ann Edwards, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44106; (216) 421-7340.